



Illocutionary Speech Acts in *An-Nabiy (The Prophet)* by Kahlil Gibran: A Pragmatic Study

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify and thoroughly analyze the types and functions of illocutionary speech acts in *An-Nabiy* by Kahlil Gibran. The primary focus is to explore how poetic language is utilized to construct philosophical meanings that influence the readers' perspectives. The method employed is descriptive qualitative with pragmatic analysis techniques. This study relies on John Searle's theory, collecting data in the form of utterances by character Almustafa to residents of Orphalese. The collected data are classified by illocutionary types, then interpreted based on context and pragmatic force. Results show that the text is dominated by assertive and directive speech acts. Assertive acts function to state, affirm, and deconstruct social dogmas through various highly reflective statements. Meanwhile, directive speech acts function to provide direction, moral guidance, and persuasive advice to encourage attitude changes. These two types work complementarily; assertives build a cognitive understanding, while directives guide actions and foster wiser attitudes. These findings further confirm the fact that language in *An-Nabiy* is highly transformative, not merely communicative. The masterpiece successfully shapes deep awareness, spiritual values, and universal perspectives of readers regarding multiple crucial aspects of human life across the world.

Keywords: illocutionary speech acts, an-Nabiy, pragmatic study

Tindak Tutur Ilokusi dalam *An-Nabiy (Sang Nabi)* Karya Kahlil Gibran: Studi Pragmatik

ABSTRAK

Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis secara menyeluruh jenis dan fungsi tindakan tutur ilokusioner dalam *An-Nabiy* karya Kahlil Gibran. Fokus utamanya adalah untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana bahasa puitis digunakan untuk membangun makna filosofis yang memengaruhi perspektif pembaca. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik analisis pragmatik. Studi ini mengacu pada teori John Searle, mengumpulkan data berupa ujaran tokoh Almustafa kepada penduduk Orphalese. Data yang dikumpulkan diklasifikasikan berdasarkan jenis ilokusioner, kemudian diinterpretasikan berdasarkan konteks dan kekuatan pragmatik. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa teks didominasi oleh tindakan tutur asertif dan direktif. Tindakan asertif berfungsi untuk menyatakan, menegaskan, dan mendekonstruksi dogma sosial melalui berbagai pernyataan yang sangat reflektif. Sementara itu, tindakan tutur direktif berfungsi untuk memberikan arahan, bimbingan moral, dan nasihat persuasif untuk mendorong perubahan sikap. Kedua jenis ini bekerja secara komplementer; kalimat-kalimat asertif membangun pemahaman kognitif, sementara kalimat-kalimat direktif membimbing tindakan dan menumbuhkan sikap yang lebih bijaksana. Temuan ini semakin menegaskan fakta bahwa bahasa dalam *An-Nabiy* sangat transformatif, bukan sekadar komunikatif. Karya agung ini berhasil membentuk kesadaran mendalam, nilai-nilai spiritual, dan perspektif universal pembaca mengenai berbagai aspek penting kehidupan manusia di seluruh dunia.

Kata kunci: tindak tutur ilokusi, an-Nabiy, studi pragmatik

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INTRODUCTION

Language is essentially the primary foundation for the construction of social reality and a bridge for the exchange of ideas that goes beyond the mere transmission of technical information. Within the dynamics of human civilization, language functions not only as a static system of symbols, but also as an instrument of action capable of transforming the psychological and sociological environment of its users (Saifudin, 2019). However, communication phenomena frequently reveal a gap between what is literally spoken and what is functionally intended. This issue of interpretation becomes increasingly complex when language is employed in the realm of didactic-philosophical literature, as exemplified in *An-Nabiy (The Prophet)* by Kahlil Gibran (Hawi, 2025). This work presents a theoretical challenge for linguists because it combines sublime poetic aesthetics with sharp moral instruction, causing each utterance to contain illocutionary force designed to profoundly influence the behavior and belief systems of its readers (Nasrullah, 2025). Although the book has become a global phenomenon since its publication in 1923, selling more than 100 million copies and being translated into over 100 languages including a highly popular Indonesian translation by Sapardi Djoko Damono, linguistic studies specifically examining its illocutionary speech act structures remain relatively limited compared to analyses focusing on its humanistic themes or lyrical aesthetics (Hawi, 2025). The fact that utterances from *The Prophet* are frequently adopted in life rituals such as weddings and funerals demonstrates an extraordinary level of pragmatic felicity, which deserves to be examined through the framework of illocutionary speech acts in order to understand how the power of language operates universally beyond the boundaries of dogma and culture.

In the realm of modern linguistics, the shift from structural analysis toward pragmatic analysis reflects the growing awareness that meaning is not merely contained within the relations between signs, but also within the context of their use (A. Rahmi & Syahputra, 2023). Pragmatics explores

how speakers use language to perform actions, a concept first introduced by J. L. Austin and later refined by John Searle (Nasarudin et al., 2024). In the context of philosophical prose such as *An-Nabiy (The Prophet)* by Kahlil Gibran, each chapter discussing themes of life such as love, work, and death essentially constitutes a series of speech acts aimed not merely at conveying information, but also at issuing commands, making promises, or expressing universal truths (Gibran, 2024). The character *Almustafa* in the work functions as a “prophet” whose utterances possess high spiritual authority, thereby fulfilling the preparatory conditions necessary for those speech acts to carry strong illocutionary force for his listeners, namely the people of Orphalese, and externally for the readers of the text itself (Nasrullah, 2025).

The popularity of *The Prophet* in Indonesia also provides an additional dimension to this research. The translation of this work by figures such as Achdiat K. Mihadja and Sapardi Djoko Damono reflects the public’s need for poetic spiritual literacy within society (Gibran, 2026). However, from a pragmatic perspective, this translation process also involves the transfer of illocutionary force from one linguistic system to another (Jödicke & Rota, 2022). Questions therefore arise regarding whether illocutionary functions such as giving advice (directive) or expressing truth (assertive) maintain their effectiveness in the Indonesian translated versions. By understanding the mechanism of illocutionary speech acts within this text, researchers can uncover Kahlil Gibran’s communication strategies in constructing an inclusive and non-dogmatic relationship between humanity, nature, and God (Books, 2026).

As a preliminary illustration of the phenomenon of illocutionary speech acts in *An-Nabiy (The Prophet)*, the following quotation may be considered.:

“Wanbarat «Al-Miṭrā» wa qālat lahu: ḥadditsnā ‘anil-ḥubbi. Rafa ‘al-Muṣṭafā ra’sahu musyriḥan ‘alal-qaumi fa-ghasyiyahumus-sukūnu, wa fī ṣautin ‘arīḍin qāla: izā auma ‘al-ḥubbu ilaikum fattabi‘ūhu,



wa in kāna wa'iral-masāliki, zaliqal-munḥadari. Wa iżā basaṭa 'alaikum janāḥaihi fa-aslimū laḥul-qiyāda.» (Gibran & Tharwat, 2010:10)

Then said Almitra, Speak to us of Love. And he raised his head and looked upon the people, and there fell a stillness upon them. And with a great voice he said: When love beckons to you, follow him, Though his ways are hard and steep. And when his wings enfold you yield to him,”

This quotation pragmatically demonstrates the existence of a linguistic act that is not merely representative in nature, but also performative, as it contains a particular intention that the speaker seeks to achieve toward the listener. Within the framework of speech act theory proposed by John Searle, illocutionary speech acts are understood as actions performed through utterances with specific purposes, such as commanding, advising, or stating something (Searle, 1969). In line with this view, J. L. Austin emphasizes that in the practice of language use, a person does not merely say something, but simultaneously performs an action, commonly referred to as doing things with words (Austin, 1962).

In the context of the quotation, the utterance delivered by Almustafa to the people of Orphalese can be categorized as a directive speech act because it clearly contains an attempt to direct the actions of the hearers. This is evident in the use of imperative forms such as “follow him” and “surrender to him,” which structurally indicate encouragement for the hearers to perform certain actions. According to the classification proposed by John Searle (1979), directives are a type of speech act intended to get the hearer to do something. Therefore, the presence of imperative forms in the utterance serves as a strong indicator that the speech possesses directive illocutionary force. Nevertheless, the directive nature of this quotation is not coercive or forceful, but rather resembles persuasive advice. This can be understood through the use of the conditional

structure “if love beckons to you,” which suggests that following love is not imposed, but recommended as a meaningful choice. From a pragmatic perspective, such a form belongs to the category of advisory directive, namely an utterance intended to provide guidance or moral direction without direct pressure (Leech, 1983). Thus, the illocutionary force of this utterance lies in its ability to influence the attitudes and perspectives of the hearers, rather than merely instructing actions in a literal sense.

The context of the utterance also plays an important role in strengthening its illocutionary force. Almustafa, as the speaker, is a spiritual figure who possesses moral authority before the people of Orphalese as the hearers. The communicative situation occurs when Almitra asks for an explanation regarding the essence of love, placing the utterance within the framework of a philosophical dialogue rich in values. Under such circumstances, what is spoken by Almustafa is understood not merely as an ordinary statement, but as a form of normative truth carrying high legitimacy. In speech act theory, such conditions are related to felicity conditions, namely the requirements for the success of a speech act, which include the authority of the speaker and the acceptance of the utterance by the hearers (Austin, 1962). Furthermore, the utterance also contains an assertive dimension that enriches its illocutionary meaning. Behind the directive form lies an implicit statement concerning the nature of love, namely that love possesses a force that must be followed, involves risks, and demands surrender. This demonstrates that in practice, a single utterance may contain more than one illocutionary function simultaneously, as explained by J. L. Austin, who argued that the boundaries between types of speech acts are not always rigid in natural language use. In addition, the use of metaphors such as “its wings” and “the hard and steep path” further strengthens the illocutionary force of the utterance. These metaphors function not only as aesthetic elements, but also as rhetorical strategies capable of generating emotional and cognitive effects on

the hearers. Consequently, the message is received not only at the rational level, but also at the affective level. In this context, it becomes evident that the illocutionary force within literary texts such as *An-Nabiy (The Prophet)* by Kahlil Gibran cannot be separated from the use of figurative language that deepens both the meaning and the impact of the utterance. Based on the analysis above, it can be concluded that the quotation represents a directive illocutionary speech act functioning as advice, supported by imperative structures, an authoritative context, and strong philosophical content. This preliminary analysis indicates that the utterances in *An-Nabiy* possess a high degree of pragmatic complexity, in which the beauty of language is intertwined with effective communicative functions in shaping the understanding and attitudes of readers.

The masterpiece *An-Nabiy (The Prophet)* by Kahlil Gibran has been analyzed from various linguistic and literary perspectives. Arpina (2022), for instance, examined the text through a stylistic study of prose, focusing on the identification of ten types of figurative language encompassing categories of comparison, contradiction, and emphasis, in which personification was found to be the most dominant stylistic device. Although the study concentrated on stylistic aspects, its findings remain highly relevant because the figurative language employed by Gibran functions as a marker of illocutionary force that assists readers in understanding the intentions and values underlying each utterance of the prophet. Furthermore, Pamungkas (2019) investigated theological values in *Sang Nabi* through a comparative study, revealing humanistic-Sufistic theological elements aimed at uniting humanity with the concept of *al-insan al-kamil* or the “perfect human being.” This study emphasizes that each stanza in Gibran’s work is not merely an expression of linguistic beauty, but also an instrument for cultivating divine values within social life. Meanwhile, Bara (2023) highlighted the sociocultural dimension by exploring the spirit of

civil society within the prose, identifying egalitarian values such as tolerance, harmony, and social equality as foundations for responding to social friction in modern society. Another linguistic study was conducted by Paramita (2021), who focused on the use of anaphora and found that pronominal anaphora was the most dominant type employed by Gibran to create textual cohesion and strengthen contextual emphasis within *Almustafa’s* teachings. Methodologically, the study by Rahmi (2021) concerning illocutionary speech acts in the sermons of Muhammad provides a strong comparative framework for the present research, as it demonstrates how prophetic discourse employs the dominance of assertive and directive speech acts to communicate spiritual visions to audiences. Overall, these various studies reinforce the position of *An-Nabiy* as a highly rich material object for analysis through the lens of pragmatics, particularly the study of illocutionary speech acts. Based on the background and the review of previous studies, this research aims to examine in depth the forms and functions of illocutionary speech acts in *The Prophet (An-Nabiy)* by Kahlil Gibran, particularly in identifying the types of speech acts and analyzing the pragmatic functions of utterances in constructing philosophical and religious meanings. Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in the pragmatic approach employed to reveal the illocutionary dimensions within the text, as well as in the attempt to relate poetic language to its communicative functions, where metaphors and figurative language serve not merely as aesthetic elements, but also as reinforcements of the illocutionary force of the utterances. Accordingly, this research is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of pragmatic studies, particularly in the application of speech act theory proposed by John Searle & Austin to literary texts, as well as practical contributions in the form of a more comprehensive understanding of how language in *An-Nabiy* functions as a means of communication capable of influencing the thoughts and attitudes of readers.



METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method with a descriptive nature aimed at exploring, understanding, and providing a systematic and accurate description of linguistic phenomena in the form of illocutionary speech acts within literary works. This method was selected because it is capable of describing pragmatic units in depth while relating textual structures to the context of speech situations (Rohanda, 2016). Theoretically, this research applies a pragmatic approach based on the theory of illocutionary speech acts proposed by John Searle, which views language not merely as an arrangement of words, but as an instrument of social action carrying specific communicative intentions or illocutionary force, such as assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative acts (Searle, 1969).

The primary data source of this study is *An-Nabiy (The Prophet)* by Kahlil Gibran, translated from English into Arabic by Tharwat Okasha. The illustrations in this book were created by Gibran himself, with the cover artwork designed by the artist Salah Taher and artistic direction by Mahdî ʿUmarân. This edition is the ninth printing, published in 2010 by Dar Al-Shorouk in Cairo. The book carries the deposit number 12590/1988 and ISBN 977-09-0513-5. The translation rights are protected by the translator, and the printing process was carried out by Mathbaʿah al-Shurûq in Cairo. Physically, the book was published as a printed edition with distinctive artistic formatting and includes illustrative elements accompanying the text. The analyzed data consist of words, phrases, sentences, and discourses uttered by the characters in the text that represent the functions of illocutionary speech acts.

Data were collected using the observation method (*Metode Simak*), which was operationalized through the basic tapping technique (*teknik sadap*), as well as the advanced technique of *Simak Bebas Libat Cakap (SBLC)*, in which the researcher acted solely as an observer of the text without intervening in the speech events,

which were subsequently documented systematically through note-taking techniques (Mahsun, 2017).

The data analysis was conducted through the Pragmatic Identity Method (*Metode Padan Pragmatis*) using the Determining Element Sorting Technique (*Teknik Pilah Unsur Penentu / PUP*) with pragmatic discriminating power, and was further supported by comparison techniques to distinguish the forms and functions of speech acts based on contextual parameters, speaker intentions, and hearers (Mahsun, 2017b). This interpretative process aimed to uncover the pragmatic layers of each utterance so that the philosophical meanings, moral persuasion, and prophetic communication relations represented in the novel could be comprehensively understood. The final results of the data analysis were then presented using an informal presentation method, namely by formulating the findings descriptively through ordinary narrative explanations.

RESULTS

Based on the results of the study on *An-Nabiy (The Prophet)* by Kahlil Gibran, translated by Sapardi Djoko Damono, various types of illocutionary speech acts were identified, reflecting the philosophical and spiritual depth of the text. The collected data indicate that the utterances of *Almustafa* are not merely acts of conveying information, but rather performative uses of language designed to influence, guide, and transform the perspectives of the people of Orphalese as well as readers more broadly. The identification process was conducted based on the classification of speech acts proposed by John Searle, which emphasizes the illocutionary force underlying each utterance. The findings reveal that the data are predominantly characterized by assertive speech acts functioning to express universal truths and directive speech acts functioning to provide guidance or moral advice. To provide a systematic overview, the following section presents the details of the findings,

including text quotations, contexts of utterance, and the types of illocutionary acts contained within them:

Data-1

“Wanbarat «Al-Miṭrā» wa qālat lahu: ḥadditsnā ‘anil-ḥubbi. Rafa’al-Muṣṭafā ra’sahu musyrifan ‘alal-qaumi fa-ghasyiyahumus-sukūnu, wa fī ṣautin ‘arīḍin qāla: izā auma’al-ḥubbu ilaikum fattabi’ūhu, wa in kāna wa’iral-masāliki, zaliqal-munḥadari. Wa izā basaṭa ‘alaikum janāḥaihi fa-aslimū lahu-qiyāda.»” (Gibran & Tharwat, 2010:10)

”Then said Almitra, Speak to us of Love. And he raised his head and looked upon the people, and there fell a stillness upon them. And with a great voice he said: When love beckons to you, follow him, Though his ways are hard and steep. And when his wings enfold you yield to him,”

Data-1 Context of the Speech

Almitra asks for advice on the essence of love. Almustafa, as a prophetic figure (moral authority), responds by providing initial guidance on how humans should behave when love comes (directive illocutionary).

Data-2

“Ista’nafat ‘Al-Miṭrā’ ḥadīṣahā: Wa mā qauluka, ayyuhal-mu’allimu fīz-zawāj? Fa ajāba qā’ilan: ... Wa lākin, falyatakhāl-lal-ti’āmakumā fushḥāt; ḥattā tutīḥā liryāḥis-samāwāti an tarquṣa bainakumā. Liyuhibba aḥadukūmal-ākhar, wa lākin lā taj’alā minal-ḥubbi qaidā.” (Gibran & Tharwat, 2010:14)

“Then Almitra spoke again and said, And what of Marriage, master? And he answered saying: But let there be spaces in your togetherness. And let the winds of the heavens dance between you. Love one another, but make not a bond of love:”

Data-2 Context of the Speech

Almitra asked Almustafa about the nature of marriage. Almustafa responded by redefining the

concept of union in marriage for the people of Orphalese (directive illocutionary).

Data-3

“Wa qālatim-ra’atun taḍummu raḍī’ahā ilā ṣadrihā: Alā ḥadditsnā ‘anil-atfāl, fa qālal-Muṣṭafā: Inna atfālakum mā hum bi atfālikum; fa laqad waladahum syawqul-ḥayāti ilā zātihā, bikum yaḥrujūna ilal-ḥayāti, wa lākin laysa minkum wa in ‘āsyū fī kanafikum famā hum mulkakum.” (Gibran & Tharwat, 2010:16)

”And a woman who held a babe against her bosom said, Speak to us of Children. And he said: Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life’s longing for itself. They come through you but not from you, And though they are with you, yet they belong not to you.”

Data-3 Context of the Speech

A woman holding her baby asked Almustafa to talk about children. Almustafa responded by breaking with the traditional dogma that children are the "property" of their parents (assertive illustration).

Data-4

“Wa hunā qāla rajulun tsariyyun: Ḥadditsnā ‘anil-‘atā’. Ajābal-Muṣṭafā: Innaka latu’ṭil-qalīla ḥīna tu’ṭī mimmā tamliku, fa izā a’ṭaita min zātika a’ṭaita ḥaqqā.” (Gibran & Tharwat, 2010 : 16)

”Then said a rich man, Speak to us of Giving. And he answered: You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.”

Data-4 Context of the Speech

A rich man asks Almustafa to speak about "Almsgiving." This request from the "rich man" is important because Almustafa's statement directly attacks the mindset of wealth accumulation (assertive illustration).



Data-5

“*Wa hunā-mbarā syaikhun ṣāhibu nuzulin fa qāla: Ḥadditšnā ‘anil-ma’kālī wal-masyrab. Qālal-Muṣṭafā: ‘... Fa iżā lam yaku buddun min an taqtulū litasuddū jū’akum, wa an taslibū labanal-ummi min raḍī’ihā lituṭfi’ū ḡama’akum, faltaj’alū mā ta’malūna iżan ṭaḡsan min ṭuḡūsil-’ibādah.’*” (Gibran & Tharwat, 2010:22)

“Then an old man, a keeper of an inn, said, Speak to us of Eating and Drinking. And he said: Would that you could live on the fragrance of the earth, and like an air plant be sustained by the light. But since you must kill to eat, and rob the newly born of its mother’s milk to quench your thirst, let it then be an act of worship.”

Data-5 Context of the Speech

An elderly food stall owner asks for advice on eating and drinking. Almustafa responds by explaining the harsh realities of the food chain before offering moral guidance (assertive illustration).

Data-6

“*Qāla fallāḡhun: Ḥadditšnā ‘anil-’amal. Qālal-Muṣṭafā: ‘... Wa mā aktsara mā sami’tum annal-’amala la’natun ‘alal-’āmilīn, wa annal-kadda ‘atsratu ḡazzīn. Wa ‘indī annakum ḡīna ta’malūn, tuḡaqqīḡūna lil-arḡī ba’ḡa ḡulmihal-mutarāmīl-laḡī kutība ‘alaikum yauma wulīd.’*” (Gibran & Tharwat, 2010:25)

”Then a ploughman said, Speak to us of Work. And he answered, saying: Always you have been told that work is a curse and labour a misfortune. But I say to you that when you work you fulfil a part of earth’s furthest dream, assigned to you when that dream was born.”

Data-6 Context of the Speech

A plowman (a manual laborer) asks for an explanation about work. Almustafa immediately responds by reversing the common narrative that sees hard work as punishment (assertive illustration).

Data-7

“*Wa mā yakūnul-’amalul-mamzūju bil-ḡubb? Huwa an tansijat-tsauba bikhuyūṭīn maslūlatin min ḡalbīka, kamā lau kāna ḡāzat-tsaubu sayartadīhi man tuḡībb. Huwa an tabniya dāran wal-maḡabbatu rā’iduka, kamā lau kānat ḡāzīhid-dāru sataḡummu man tuḡībb.’*” (Gibran & Tharwat, 2010:27)

”And what is it to work with love? It is to weave the cloth with threads drawn from your heart, even as if your beloved were to wear that cloth. It is to build a house with affection, even as if your beloved were to dwell in that house.”

Data-7 Context of the Speech

Almustafa answers an imaginary question about the practice of "working with love." (directive illustration).

Data-8

“*Wa hunālika ḡālatim-ra’atun: Ḥadditšnā ‘anil-faraḡī wal-ḡuzn. Qālal-Muṣṭafā: ‘Innamā farahukum ḡuznukum ruḡī’a ‘an wajḡīhil-ḡīnā’. Wa mā aktsara mā tamtalī’ul-bī’rul-laṭī tastaḡūna minhā ḡaḡakātīkum bifaiḡī dumū’ikum.’*” (Gibran & Tharwat, 2010:30)

“Then a woman said, Speak to us of joy and sorrow. And he answered: your joy is your sorrow unmasked. And the selfsame well from which your laughter rises was oftentimes filled with your tears.”

Data-8 Context of the Speech

A woman asks Almustafa to talk about "Joy and Sorrow." Almustafa immediately responds with a statement that breaks the separation of the two emotions (assertive illustration).

Data-9

“*Wa ‘inda zālika taḡaddama ilaihi bannā’un, wa qāla: Ḥadditšnā ‘anil-buyūt. Fa ḡālal-Muṣṭafā: ‘Litabni bikhayālika khamīlatan ḡīl-khalā’i, ḡabla an tuḡīma dāran warā’a aswāril-madīnah; fakamā ta’ūdu ilā dārika ma’al-gasaḡī kulla masā’in, kaḡālikal-ḡā’imut-ṭawwāḡū ḡīka ya’ūbu min uḡuḡīhil-ba’īdi waḡīdā. Inna baitaka huwa jasadukal-akbar .’*” (Gibran & Tharwat, 2010:32)

”Then a mason came forth and said, Speak to us of Houses. And he answered and said: Build of your imaginings a bower in the wilderness ere you build a house within the city walls. For even as you have home-comings in your twilight, so has the wanderer in you, the ever-distant and alone. Your house is your larger body.”

Data-9 Context of the Speech

A bricklayer (a very materialistic profession/tied to the physical structure) asks for advice about "Home." Almustafa responds by breaking down the physical boundaries (directive illustration).

Data-10

“*Wa qālan-nassāju: Ḥadditšnā ‘anit-tsiyāb. Fa ajābahul-Muṣṭafā: ‘Inna tsiyābakum tahjubu min jamālikumul-katsīr, lakinnahā lā tukhft mā qabuha fikum. Wa innakum, wa in tansyudū fits-tsiyābi ḥurriyyatal-khalwati bi anfusikum, latajidūna fihā rasanān wa qaidā*” (Gibran & Tharwat, 2010:36)

”And the weaver said, Speak to us of Clothes. And he answered: Your clothes conceal much of your beauty, yet they hide not the unbeautiful. And though you seek in garments the freedom of privacy you may find in them a harness and a chain.”

Data-10 Context of the Speech

A weaver asks for advice on clothing. Almustafa reverses the common perception that clothing is a shield or a means of freedom of expression (assertive illustration).

Data-11

“*Wa qāla tājirun: ḥadditšnā ‘anil-bai‘i wasy-syirā‘i. Fa qālal-Muṣṭafā: Innal-arḍa tu‘tīkum tsimārahā, fatafkīkumul-ḥājata lau ‘araftum kaifa tamla‘ūna minhā akuffakum. Fa-in antum tabādaltum ni‘amahā niltumul-wafrata war-rakhā‘a, wa tābat biḥālika nufūsukum, fa-in lam yajri bainakumul-tabādulu bil-ḥubbi wal-‘adlir-rafiqi, syarihat fikum nufūsun wa jā‘at ukhrā.*” (Gibran & Tharwat, 2010:38)

”And a merchant said, Speak to us of buying and selling.. And he answered and said: To you the earth yields her fruit, and you shall not want if you but know how to fill your hands. It is in exchanging the gifts of the earth that you shall find abundance and be satisfied. Yet unless the exchange be in love and kindly justice, it will but lead some to greed and others to hunger.”

Data-11 Context of the Speech

A merchant seeks advice on buying and selling. Almustafa lays out the ethical foundations before discussing the technicalities of trading. (Assertive illustration)

Data-12

“*Wa qālat kāhinatun: Ḥadditšnā ‘aniṣ-ṣalāh. Fa qālal-Muṣṭafā: ‘Antum tuṣallūna izā massakum ḍurrun au a‘wazatkum ḥājah, wa laitakum tuṣallūna aiḍan izā gamara qulūbakumul-faraḥu wa ‘amara ayyāmakumur-rakhā*”(Gibran & Tharwat, 2010:73)

“Then a Priestess said, Speak to us of prayer. And he answered, saying: You pray in your distress and in your need; would that you might pray also in the fullness of your joy and in your days of abundance.”

Data-12 Context of the Speech

A female priestess asks Almustafa to speak about prayer. Almustafa immediately responds by criticizing people's selfish motivations when praying (directive illustration).

Data-13

“*Wa qāla khaṭībun: Ḥadditšnā ‘anil-ḥurriyyah. Fa qālal-Muṣṭafā: ‘Laqad ra‘aitukum takhīrūna sujjadan, wa tujillūna ḥurriyyatakum ‘inda abwābil-madīnah, wa ft ruknil-muṣṭalā min buyūtikum, kasya‘nil-‘abīdi, yuzillūna anfusahum amāmaṭ-ṭāgiyah, wa yusabbihūna biḥamdihī, ma‘a annahu jallāduhum.*”(Gibran & Tharwat, 2010:9)



”And an orator said, Speak to us of Freedom. And he answered: At the city gate and by your fireside I have seen you prostrate yourselves and worship your own freedom, Even as slaves humble themselves before a tyrant and praise him though he slays them.”

Data-13 Context of the Speech

An orator asks for advice on freedom. Almustafa responds by criticizing the way Orphalese society treats the idea of freedom (assertive illustration).

Data-14

“*Wa ‘adatil-kāhinatu ilal-kalāmi qā’ilatan: ḥadditsnā ‘anil-‘aqli wal-‘āḥifati. Fa qālal-Muṣṭafā: «Mā aktsara mā takūnu nufūsikum sāhata qitālin, tasyunnuhu ‘uqūlukum wa nuhākum ‘alā ‘awāḥifikum wa syahawātikum. Wa innī la-atamannā an aḥilla fī nufūsikum ṣāni‘a salāmin, fa-usyī‘al-waḥdata baina ‘anāṣirikumul-mutanāfirati, wa arudda tanāfusahā ilā wi’āmin wa tanāghumin*” (Gibran & Tharwat, 2010:53)

“And the priestess spoke again and said: Speak to us of reason and passion. And he answered, saying: Your soul is oftentimes a battlefield, upon which your reason and your judgment wage war against your passion and your appetite. Would that I could be the peacemaker in your soul, that I might turn the discord and the rivalry of your elements into oneness and melody.”

Data-14 Context of the Speech

A female priestess asks for advice on reason and lust. Almustafa responds by validating the reality of human inner conflict (assertive illustration).

Data-15

“*Wa taḥaddatsatim-ra’atun qā’ilatan: ḥadditsnā ‘anil-alam. Fa qālal-Muṣṭafā: «Innal-alama-llaḏī bikum, huwa an yatafattaqas-sitru-llaḏī yuḥīṭu bi-idrākikum. Wa kamā anna nawātats-tamarati tatafattaqu litaksyifa qalbahā lisyysamsi, kaḏālikal-alamu lā manāṣa lakum min an takhburūhu.*” (Gibran & Tharwat, 2010 : 56)

“And a woman spoke, saying, Tell us of Pain. And he said: Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding. Even as the stone of the fruit must break, that its heart may stand in the sun, so must you know pain.”

Data-15 Context of the Speech

A woman asks Almustafa to talk about pain. Almustafa responds by analogizing pain to the birth of a new consciousness (assertive illustration).

Data-16

“*Wa qāla rajulun: ḥadditsnā ‘an ma‘rifatin-nafsi. Fa qālal-Muṣṭafā: «Inna qulūbakum fī ṣamtin tudriku asrāral-ayyāmi wal-layālī, lakinna āḏānakum tata‘aṭṭasyu ilā ṣautil-ma‘rifati yanba‘itsu min qulūbikum. Wa kam tatamannau-na an ta‘rifū bil-lafzi mā ‘araḏtumūhu dā‘iman bil-fikri, wa an talmasū bi-aṣābi‘ikumul-‘uryi fī ajsādi aḥlāmikumul-‘āriyati.*” (Gibran & Tharwat, 2010:58)

“And a man said, Speak to us of self-knowledge. And he answered, saying: Your hearts know in silence the secrets of the days and the nights. But your ears thirst for the sound of your heart’s knowledge. You would know in words that which you have always known in thought. You would touch with your fingers the naked body of your dreams.”

Data-16 Context of the Speech

A man asks for advice on Self-Awareness. Almustafa distinguishes between "inner knowledge" (intuition/heart) and "outer knowledge" (five senses/ears). assertive illustration).

Data-17

“*Wa lā taqul: ‘Wajadtul-ḥaqīqah’, bal qul: ‘Wajadtu ba‘dal-ḥaqīqah’. Wa lā taqul: ‘Iktaṣyaftu sabīlar-rūḥ’, bal qul: ‘Wajadur-rūḥa tasīru fī sabīlī’.*” (Gibran & Tharwat, 2010:59)

”Say not, “I have found the truth,” but rather, “I have found a truth.” Say not, “I have found the path of the soul.” Say rather, “I have met the soul walking upon my path.”

Data-17 Context of the Speech

A guide to language etiquette when one attains spiritual enlightenment. The context is answering a young man's question about self-awareness (directive illustration).

Data-18

“*Wa hunālika takallamat Al-Miṭrā, wa qālat: Hallā tuḥadditšunāl-āna ‘anil-maut. Fa qālal-Muṣṭafā: ‘... Fa in syi’tum ḥaqqan an tarfa’ul-ḥijāba ‘an kunhil-maut, faftahū qulūbakum ‘alā maṣārī’ihā likiyānil-ḥayāh*” (Gibran & Tharwat, 2010:88)
“Then Almitra spoke, saying, We would ask now of Death. And he said: If you would indeed behold the spirit of death, open your heart wide unto the body of life;”

Data-18 Context of the Speech

The solution or path that Almustafa provides to understand death (directive illustration)

DISCUSSION

To obtain a more systematic understanding of the research findings, the discussion of illocutionary speech acts in An-Nabiy (The Prophet) by Kahlil Gibran is organized into subsections based on the classification of illocutionary acts proposed by John Searle. This categorization aims to present the patterns of language use in a more structured manner, enabling the relationship between the forms of utterances, the contexts of utterance, and their pragmatic functions to be analyzed more comprehensively. Each type of speech act is identified not only through its linguistic characteristics, but also interpreted according to its communicative role in constructing the philosophical and spiritual discourse within the text. Through this focused subdivision, the analysis is expected to reveal the dominant tendencies

of certain types of illocutionary acts and explain their contribution to shaping the overall meaning of the work as a persuasive and reflective discourse.

Assertive Speech Acts

Assertive speech acts in An-Nabiy (The Prophet) by Kahlil Gibran constitute forms of utterances that function to state and affirm truths believed by the speaker. Within the framework of John Searle’s theory, this type of illocutionary act commits the speaker to the proposition being conveyed. Based on the results of the data analysis, assertive utterances appear to be predominantly employed by the character Almustafa, particularly in responding to various existential questions raised by the people of Orphalese concerning topics such as children, work, freedom, and suffering. These utterances are not merely informative in nature, but also function as a means of reconstructing and even deconstructing conventional understandings that have long been rooted within society, thereby presenting new perspectives that are more reflective and universal. Furthermore, the use of metaphorical language in the delivery of assertive speech acts strengthens their illocutionary force, since the meanings produced are not literal, but instead open broad spaces for deeper interpretation by readers. Therefore, assertive speech acts in this work function not only as conveyors of truth, but also as instruments for the formation of philosophical and spiritual consciousness, which constitute the core of the overall discourse within the text.

The quotation above represents an assertive illocutionary speech act that functions to state and affirm a philosophical truth concerning the relationship between parents and children. This is clearly reflected in the Arabic data, namely “*Inna amfālakum mā hum bi amfālikum... wa lākin laysa minkum... famā hum mulkakum.*”, which structurally takes the form of declarative utterances and is dominated by constructions of negation. Theoretically, this classification is consistent with



the view of John Searle, who states that assertive (or representative) speech acts are utterances that commit the speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition. In this context, Almustafa is not attempting to direct the actions of the hearers, but rather conveying a universal truth claim, thereby fulfilling the primary characteristics of assertive speech acts.

From the perspective of J. L. Austin, the utterance belongs to the category of constative utterance, namely an utterance that functions to describe a particular condition or reality (Austin, 1962). The use of emphatic particles such as “inna” (indeed or verily) together with the negation patterns “Mā... laysa... famā” indicates the speaker’s strong intention to affirm propositional truth rather than to command or request action. Pragmatically, this utterance operates within the cognitive domain by reconstructing belief systems that have long been established within society, particularly the paradigm of parental ownership over children. This argument is further strengthened by rhetorical strategies in the form of repeated negation, which functions as ideological reinforcement, as well as by the use of the metaphor “*Alhayatu*” (Life), personified as an entity that “gives birth” to children, thereby providing philosophical legitimacy to the proposition being conveyed. Therefore, based on the linguistic evidence found in the Arabic data, its communicative function, and the theoretical foundations proposed by John Searle and J. L. Austin, the utterance is appropriately categorized as an assertive illocutionary speech act because it is oriented toward conveying and affirming truth rather than regulating the actions of the hearers.

Interestingly, however, the utterance does not remain solely within the assertive function. After establishing such awareness, Almustafa continues with “*Faltaj ‘alū mā ta ‘malūna izan maqsan min muqūsil- ‘ibādah.*”, which carries the nuance of advice or guidance, thereby indicating a directive function. From the perspective of J. L. Austin, this demonstrates that a single utterance may contain

more than one illocutionary force simultaneously, in which the assertive element functions as the cognitive foundation, while the directive element serves as its practical implication. Pragmatically, this strategy is highly effective because the speaker first “shocks” the consciousness of the hearers through provocative statements and then directs them toward a particular moral attitude, namely viewing the act of eating as a form of reverence or worship. Furthermore, the strength of this utterance also lies in its use of contrasting diction between terms associated with violence (killing, seizing) and spiritual terminology (worship), which creates a paradoxical effect and reinforces its illocutionary force. Thus, although the utterance contains directive elements in its concluding section, it remains predominantly categorized as assertive because it originates from the expression of a factual truth that serves as the basis for the formation of moral consciousness.

Pragmatically, this utterance possesses strong force because it functions as an antithesis to long-established social dogmas, particularly among laborers such as farmers and ploughmen. From the perspective of J. L. Austin, the utterance can be understood as a constative statement that not only describes reality, but also constructs a new reality through language. Almustafa does not command, “work with pride”; rather, he transforms the hearers’ perspective by declaring that work constitutes part of the fulfillment of a cosmic purpose (*\$ulmihal-mutarāmī*). This strategy is reinforced through the use of sharp semantic oppositions between “curse/misfortune” and “dream,” thereby creating a contrastive effect that deepens the meaning of the utterance. Accordingly, this utterance functions not only as an assertive act in the sense of conveying truth, but also as an instrument of empowerment capable of elevating the value and dignity of labor within a broader philosophical and spiritual perspective.

The quotation “*Inna tsiyābakum tahjubu min jamālikumul-katsīr, lakinnahā lā tukhfī mā qabuḥa fīkum ... wa innakum ... latajīdūna fīhā rasanān wa qaidā*” can be understood as an assertive

illocutionary speech act because Almustafa is expressing a particular view or truth concerning the meaning of clothing rather than issuing commands or prohibitions. Structurally, the utterance is clearly declarative and reinforced by emphatic markers such as “inna” and “la”, indicating that the speaker strongly intends to emphasize the truth of his statement. Within the framework proposed by John Searle, this utterance belongs to the assertive category because the speaker is committed to the truth of the proposition being conveyed. Almustafa is not instructing people to remove their clothes or dress in a certain way, but rather explaining how clothing actually functions within human life. From the perspective of meaning, the utterance is particularly striking because it reverses common assumptions. Clothing is generally regarded as protection or as a symbol of freedom of expression, yet here it is described as something that cannot truly conceal “what is ugly” and may even become a “*Qaidan*” (chain or constraint). In the perspective of J. L. Austin, this can be interpreted as a constative statement that not only describes reality, but also invites readers to perceive a dimension that is rarely recognized. Its pragmatic force lies in its attempt to “uncover” consciousness, namely the realization that what is often perceived as freedom may in fact become a form of social restraint. The use of semantic opposition, such as “seeking freedom” yet “finding chains,” strengthens the message and gives it a reflective quality. Therefore, this utterance is appropriately categorized as assertive because its primary focus lies in conveying and affirming meaning rather than directly directing the actions of the hearers.

Directive Speech Acts

Directive speech acts in *An-Nabiy (The Prophet)* by Kahlil Gibran appear in utterances intended to direct the attitudes and actions of the hearers, although they are conveyed in a subtle and non-coercive manner. Within the framework proposed by John Searle, directives are a type of illocutionary act used by speakers to encourage

hearers to perform certain actions. This can be observed through the use of imperative forms such as “*Fattabi‘ūhu*” (then follow him), “*Fa-aslimū*” (then surrender yourselves), or then let yourselves make. However, unlike ordinary commands, the directives found in this text function more as reflective advice or invitations rather than rigid instructions. In this regard, the approach aligns with the concept of advisory directive proposed by Geoffrey Leech, in which utterances function to provide guidance without direct pressure. Pragmatically, Almustafa generally establishes understanding first through assertive statements before subsequently directing the hearers toward particular attitudes, making the guidance appear more reasonable and easier to accept. Thus, directive speech acts in this work not only encourage action, but also contribute to shaping the perspectives and consciousness of readers on a deeper level.

Semantically, Almustafa is not merely explaining the meaning of marriage, but also offering guidance on how relationships should be nurtured, namely that closeness does not necessarily require the loss of personal space, and that love should not become a “*qaidā*” (chain or bondage). From the perspective of Geoffrey Leech, this may be understood as an advisory directive, a form of directive that functions more as recommendation than command. Its pragmatic force lies in its attempt to shape a new understanding of marriage, not as possession, but as a relationship that continues to provide room for freedom. Therefore, this utterance is appropriately categorized as directive because it contains a clear element of guidance, even though it is expressed through a poetic and persuasive style.

Pragmatically, the utterance feels subtle because it is framed in descriptive and metaphorical language, such as “weaving cloth with threads drawn from the heart” or “building a house as though for one’s beloved.” From the perspective of Geoffrey Leech, this belongs to the category of advisory directive, namely guidance



expressed as advice rather than coercive command. Its illocutionary force lies in its ability to shape attitudes by encouraging readers not to work mechanically, but instead with emotional awareness and the values of compassion. Therefore, although the utterance appears explanatory in form, it remains directive in nature because it contains an implicit encouragement to act in accordance with the values being conveyed. In terms of its mode of delivery, however, this guidance does not feel like a harsh command, but rather resembles a profound and reflective invitation. Almustafa does not define death in a literal or conceptual manner; instead, he offers a “way” of understanding it, namely by opening oneself to life itself. From the perspective of Geoffrey Leech, this may be understood as an advisory directive, because it functions as guidance conveyed through advice rather than coercion. Pragmatically, the utterance shifts the focus from fear of death toward openness to life. Therefore, this datum is appropriately categorized as a directive speech act because it contains a clear encouragement toward action, even though it is expressed through poetic and deeply meaningful language.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the data analysis, it can be concluded that the utterances in *An-Nabiy* by Kahlil Gibran are predominantly characterized by the use of assertive and directive illocutionary speech acts that are closely interconnected. Assertive speech acts are employed by Almustafa to state, affirm, and simultaneously correct various beliefs that have become deeply rooted within society, including those related to children, charity, work, emotions, and freedom. Through strong declarative forms, the speaker demonstrates commitment to the truth of the propositions being conveyed, as explained in the theory of John Searle. Meanwhile, directive speech acts appear as a continuation of the assertive acts, taking the form of guidance, advice, and recommendations that encourage changes in the attitudes and

perspectives of the hearers. Interestingly, the directives in this text are not delivered in a rigid or coercive manner, but rather through poetic, metaphorical, and reflective language, making them feel more like invitations than commands. Thus, these two types of speech acts operate continuously and complementarily: assertives function to build awareness, while directives function to guide action. This demonstrates that language in the work functions not only as a means of communication, but also as an instrument for transforming thought and shaping the philosophical consciousness of readers.

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